

IDAHO SPOKESMAN REVIEW

Saturday

Inside our schools: Charter graduate attends Idaho Business Week

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The shaving cream fight threw Josi Speers for a loop.

When the 18-year-old arrived at the University of Idaho last month for Idaho Business Week, she was expecting a "stoic, stern, studious academic atmosphere" - much like the Coeur d'Alene Charter Academy where she had gone to high school.

"I wasn't quite sure what I'd gotten into the first day," Speers said. Little did she know that there was more to the shaving cream battle than fun and games. Organizers of the weeklong business program used the icebreaker as a way to identify leaders in the group of 50 students.

Speers emerged as one of those leaders and was voted CEO of one of five pretend companies of student "business professionals."

She was chosen to head Company B, also known throughout the course of the week as Company Black or Black Inc.

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"It was kind of a power trip," Speers said. "It was a lot of responsibility and a lot of hard work."

Her group took top prize in the trade-show activity, where they tried to get others to invest in their product - a condominium for cockroaches. Speers said they decided to make everything in their booth black to convey a professional, serious attitude. The bug condo also garnered a first-place prize for Company B.

The Cockroach Condo was created during a competition called "Hunk of Junk." One at a time, companies got to pick from miscellaneous junk, for a total of 15 items.

They marketed the Cockroach Condo as a pest-control mechanism, marketed toward individuals concerned about the environment and animals.

"Its scientific foundation's actually not solid by any means," Speers said. "Come on, a Cockroach Condo? It's ridiculous."

Speers said she also learned about the stock exchange, lobbying and marketing at Idaho Business Week .

The days started early, with breakfast at 7 a.m. and sessions running until 10 or 11 at night.

Speers' experience was sponsored by bankcda. Charles Clock, a member of the bank's board of directors, said the bank has sponsored a student's trip to Idaho Business Week for the past few years. He said he's hoping other area businesses will sign on to sponsor additional students.

Clock said many people are under the mistaken impression that Idaho Business Week is only for students who plan to major in business.

"It can be for anybody," Clock said.

Though Speers eventually wants to go into business for herself, she said her immediate plans are to study chemistry at North Idaho College.

She wants to specifically study food science and "catalog the chemical reaction of food ingredients on a molecular level."

Then, Speers said she plans on opening a pastry shop.

"I figured this would be a great foundation," Speers said of her experience at Idaho Business Week. "I love learning. I love finding out interesting things."